Robert Wight:
Robert Wight (1796-1872) came to India as an army medical person in the year 1819. He received training in surgery under Daniel Rutherford at Edinburgh. Though he was employed as surgeon in the company army, he has nurtured interest to study Indian plants and in his leisure time in the regimental duties he studied about plants. Company government assigned him to study flora of northern parts of Madras Presidency. He made extensive collections especially in the Southern region of peninsular India. He had also used to send people for collecting plants to far of distances. His stations being Samallakota where official botanists from Roxburgh and his predecessors were stationed. The tradition of employing men of the countryside as plant collectors was alive. He managed to get three botanical works, an early edition of Linneaus's *Genera Plantarum*, Wildenew's *Species Plantarum* and Person's *Synopsis*, by which he proceeded to determine his findings. In the year 1826 Wight was appointed as official botanist in the Madras Government, which was assumed, earlier by Koenig, Roxburgh, Heyne and Russel. Wight continued as an official botanist for two years, till the post was finally abolished in 1828. Even after this unexpected incident, Wight continued his interest in this field and made collections with great enthusiasm. During his thirty-five years in India, Wight has described about 38 genera and more than 3000 species of Indian plants. His contributions to Indian botany include about 28 publications of which *Illustrations of Indian botany* (1831), *Icones planetarium Indiae Orientalis* (1838-53), *Spicilegium. Neligherrense*, (1846-51) were widely acknowledged taxonomy studies of Indian plants. In 1834 he published along with G. A. Walker Arnott *the prodromus Florae Peninsula Indie Orientalis*. He also
worked on economic crops especially experimenting with exotic varieties of cotton, sugarcane, and other commercial crops.

**W. R. Robertson:**

W. R. Robertson, was a son of an English farmer. He received theoretical and practical training in agriculture at the Royal College of Agricultural at Cirencester. Later worked as land agent, Valuer and bailiff in important and monorail farms. Arrived in Madras in 1868 to take as Superintendent of Saidapet Farm. He worked at same time as principal of the college of agriculture, Saidapet during 1876-87 and he was the architect of the Saidapet College of Agriculture and Experimental Farm. He was the first to introduce Swedish plough, American sorghums, English bulls; keen and practical advocator of improved methods. Established the Saidapet breed of sheep. Though employed at Saidapet under a Committee, he was from the start in the service of the Madras Government. He wrote Agricultural TextBook for V and VI standard.

**Charles Benson:**

Charles Benson was appointed initially as an assistant superintendent in the Saidapet Farm in 1874. He was educated at Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester. He wrote “The Saidapet Experimental Farm Manual and Guide in 1879 and an Agricultural Account of Kurnool District 1889. He served as acting principal between 1878-80 and did educational work in connection with the college of the farm. The College and botanical garden were handed over to Department of Public Instruction while the farm remained under the Board of Revenue. When the farm was abolished on 1885, Benson was appointed Assistant commissioner of Agriculture. He was later promoted to the Deputy Director of Land Records and Agriculture.
C. A. Barber:
Dr. Charles Alfred Barber came to India in 1898 to take up the appointment of Government Botanist as well as the Director of the Botanical Survey of South India. He was born in South Africa. Barber was an expert in systematic and economic botany. He obtained a first class in the Natural History Tripos at Cambridge. He was for some time demonstrator of botany at Cambridge. He worked in Leeward Island in West Indies during 1891 to 95. Before coming to Madras in 1898, he worked as a lecturer of Botany at Cooper Hill College in England. He was sent to Madras intending originally to prepare flora of the Madras Presidency for this purpose he was appointed as Director of the Botanical Survey of Southern India. But owing to spread of red rot disease on sugarcane he was asked by the government of the Madras to work on improving of disease resistant canes. Besides his work on sugarcane he simultaneously carried botanical explorations. In 1908 he joined the newly established Agricultural College and Research Institute at Coimbatore as a government botanist but along his work on botany he supervised mycology and entomology work in the Institute. In 1912 on the creation of the Central Sugarcane Station Barber was appointed as the first sugarcane expert. He introduced several sugarcane strains from the Coimbatore Central Sugarcane Station. He undertook breeding work to evolve high yielding and disease resistant varieties thereby laid foundation for succeeding breeding work.

T. S. Venkataramanujam:
T.S. Venkataramanujam was born at Salem and obtained B. A. degree in Botany from the Presidency College, Madras in 1905. He joined as an assistant in the Agriculture College at Coimbatore and when Central Sugarcane Station was opened in Coimbatore he was appointed as assistant under government sugarcane expert Barber. In 1919, on the retirement of Barber from the post of sugarcane expert, Venkataramanujam assumed the charge of the station. While
the credit of breeding with intraspecific hybridisation- saccarum spotanum was assigned to Barber, it was T.S. Venkataramnujam first made intergeneric hybridization that is between sugarcane and sorghum as well as sugarcane and bamboo intending to meet the demand for early and late cane, the cane which would not lodge, and canes would resist diseases, pests and other adverse conditions.

**Kadambi Rangachariar:**
Kadambi Rangachariar after passing as a first class masters of Arts in Botany in 1894 he joined as assistant in the Government Museum at Madras. Botany was, however, the subject nearest to his heart and he soon turned his attention to it. He worked at various sections in the Government Museum, Madras, enriched by adding considerably to the specimens and improving their arrangement. During this period, he also worked as professor of Botany at the Presidency College, Madras, and soon became a familiar figure at University and other examinations. In 1909 he became the Government lecturing and systematic botanist at the Agricultural College and Research Institute, Coimbatore and was an in charge of the Madras Herbarium since 1912. He wrote along with Tadulinga Mudaliar the *Handbook of South Indian Grass and Common Fodder Grass of the Madras Presidency*. He was awarded the title of Rai Bahadur in 1913 and Dewan Bahadur in 1923 for his valuable contributions. He published a manual of Elementary Botany which had contributed to the students of botany in India as they had a great difficulty of finding in their textbooks. His book on Botany was accepted as textbook in various colleges. In his book, Rangachariar gave importance to Indian plants. He also considerably contributed to research on weeds of agricultural land. He wanted botanical knowledge should spread beyond those who knew English and in this measure he achieved signal success. He translated his Text Book of Botany into vernacular language and he was rightly called as the ‘giver’ of
Botany to teachers of rural schools in this presidency. He was elected as president of the Botanical section of the Indian Science Congress at Bangalore in the year 1917 and of the Indian Botanical Society in the year 1922. His career in the Madras Agricultural department marked a definite stage in its evolution. He was the first Indian who was appointed to the position which were till then preserved for the Europeans.

**Walter Kees:**
Walter Kees was of son of Dr. Kees who was principal of Madras Medical College. Walter Kees worked as a principal of the Saidapet Agricultural College during 1887-1905. He was the second principal at Saidapet College after Robertson. He was also well known in Madras through popular lectures on chemical crafts and sanitation.

**J. W. Shepperson:**
J. W. Shepperson was a practical farmer. He was the first principal of the College of Agriculture at Coimbatore during 1906-09, specialized in agricultural machinery. He laid out spacing and water experiments on paddy in central farm. He left India and took up farming on a commercial basis in Canada.

**R. Cecil Wood:**
R. Cecil Wood was a second Principal of the Agricultural College at Coimbatore. He took interest in organising the Madras Agricultural Students Union (MASU) and allied activities. He introduced two years course in agriculture. He wrote ‘Agriculture notebook’.
Board of Agriculture

The Board of Agriculture in India was constituted in 1904. It was intended that it should fulfill two functions. These were to advise Government on agricultural matters and to bring agricultural experts working in various parts of India into touch with each other. Until 1912, it met annually at Pusa, but since then, the meetings have been held biennially and alternately at Pusa and in provinces. The membership of the Board has been enlarged from time to time. In addition to the Agricultural Adviser and the heads of sections at Pusa, other members of the Board included the directors of agriculture in the provinces, members of the expert staff of the provincial agricultural departments, the Director of the Imperial Institute of Veterinary Research and representatives of the provincial veterinary departments, the secretary of the Indian Central Cotton Committee, the Director General of Commercial Intelligence, representatives of the Indian tea Association and the United Planters Association of Southern India and members of the agricultural departments of those Indian States which possess such departments. In addition, a limited number of non-officials were invited to attend as visitors. The functions of the Board as an advisory body to the Government of India and local government were prepared during the annual meetings. It was the only way, which Indian states brought into touch with the agricultural problems of British India and the methods employed in solving them.
Indian Council Agricultural research

The Council has developed into a premier organization for guidance, finance and also coordinating research problems on agriculture and animal husbandry. Apart them, the Council's other activities include the work on agricultural education and extension. The other developments occurred were the organization of commodity committees dealing with research in respect of particular crops. They were constituted as semi-autonomous bodies with financial grants from the Government of India, or by income from cesses, and were located in the main growing regions of the crops concerned. The earliest commodity committee to be organised was the Indian central cotton committee located in Bombay was started even before the council was formed.

The Royal Commission on Agriculture had recommended that for the use of the council a Agricultural Research fund should be constituted with a grant of Rs. 50 lakh from the central revenue and additions to it should be made from time to time as financial conditions permitted. The Government, however, sanctioned an initial lumps grant was fix at Rs. 25 lakh per annum, of which Rs. five lakh was devoted to the furtherance of the scientific objects of the Council and Rs. 2.25 lakh to the cost staff and secretariat. The Council did not set up any research institutes of its own but sponsors agriculture research in conjunction with the central and state Government Administration of Union Territories, universities and recognized private institutes. The advantage of the system of financing research was two folds. It has helped to strengthen and expand the facilities for the conduct of the research available in the central and state research institutions, university and private institutions with funds provided by the council. It has also enabled the council to function as a purely scientific society without unduly getting itself entangled in administrative details. The Council interests itself mainly regional or all India importance.